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1825 Simon

Epilepsy

W. Muller

History and Pathology

Epilepsy

W. Muller

London

1825



An Essay

On The

Period March 6<sup>th</sup>  
1826

History and Pathology  
of  
Epilepsy

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By William Shuttice  
of  
Fredericksburg  
Virginia.

(1825)

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Epilepsy.

*Non mihi est tempus averti*

*Ponere signa necis praecipitis. Hor.*

Disease, the penalty incurred by the disobedience of our progenitors, assails man in such a variety of shapes and through so many avenues, that it would be impossible for the multifarious Proteus to represent, the wisdom of Solomon to explore, or the strength of Hercules to resist it. Striking impartially, the peasant in his hut, and the prince in his palace; it lays its iron hand on the head of supreme majesty and humble inferiority. Its power is not displayed in a more terrific form, or in a more insidious guise than when it seizes on the nervous system. This fabric, so exquisitely delicate & sensitive, is so intimately connected with the mental faculty, that when it is assailed by disease; it throws into confusion the most admirable of man's possessions.

*Epiphany*

The first of the three days of the octave of Epiphany is the feast of the Kings. The second is the feast of the Circumcision of Christ. The third is the feast of the Epiphany of Christ. The fourth is the feast of the Baptism of Christ. The fifth is the feast of the Transfiguration of Christ. The sixth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The seventh is the feast of the Pentecost. The eighth is the feast of the Trinity. The ninth is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The tenth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The eleventh is the feast of the Pentecost. The twelfth is the feast of the Trinity. The thirteenth is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The fourteenth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The fifteenth is the feast of the Pentecost. The sixteenth is the feast of the Trinity. The seventeenth is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The eighteenth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The nineteenth is the feast of the Pentecost. The twentieth is the feast of the Trinity. The twenty-first is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The twenty-second is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The twenty-third is the feast of the Pentecost. The twenty-fourth is the feast of the Trinity. The twenty-fifth is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The twenty-sixth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The twenty-seventh is the feast of the Pentecost. The twenty-eighth is the feast of the Trinity. The twenty-ninth is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The thirtieth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The thirty-first is the feast of the Pentecost. The thirty-second is the feast of the Trinity. The thirty-third is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The thirty-fourth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The thirty-fifth is the feast of the Pentecost. The thirty-sixth is the feast of the Trinity. The thirty-seventh is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The thirty-eighth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The thirty-ninth is the feast of the Pentecost. The fortieth is the feast of the Trinity. The forty-first is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The forty-second is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The forty-third is the feast of the Pentecost. The forty-fourth is the feast of the Trinity. The forty-fifth is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The forty-sixth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The forty-seventh is the feast of the Pentecost. The forty-eighth is the feast of the Trinity. The forty-ninth is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The fiftieth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The fifty-first is the feast of the Pentecost. The fifty-second is the feast of the Trinity. The fifty-third is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The fifty-fourth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The fifty-fifth is the feast of the Pentecost. The fifty-sixth is the feast of the Trinity. The fifty-seventh is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The fifty-eighth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The fifty-ninth is the feast of the Pentecost. The sixtieth is the feast of the Trinity. The sixty-first is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The sixty-second is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The sixty-third is the feast of the Pentecost. The sixty-fourth is the feast of the Trinity. The sixty-fifth is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The sixty-sixth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The sixty-seventh is the feast of the Pentecost. The sixty-eighth is the feast of the Trinity. The sixty-ninth is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The seventieth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The seventy-first is the feast of the Pentecost. The seventy-second is the feast of the Trinity. The seventy-third is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The seventy-fourth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The seventy-fifth is the feast of the Pentecost. The seventy-sixth is the feast of the Trinity. The seventy-seventh is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The seventy-eighth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The seventy-ninth is the feast of the Pentecost. The eightieth is the feast of the Trinity. The eighty-first is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The eighty-second is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The eighty-third is the feast of the Pentecost. The eighty-fourth is the feast of the Trinity. The eighty-fifth is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The eighty-sixth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The eighty-seventh is the feast of the Pentecost. The eighty-eighth is the feast of the Trinity. The eighty-ninth is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The ninetieth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The ninety-first is the feast of the Pentecost. The ninety-second is the feast of the Trinity. The ninety-third is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The ninety-fourth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The ninety-fifth is the feast of the Pentecost. The ninety-sixth is the feast of the Trinity. The ninety-seventh is the feast of the Corpus Christi. The ninety-eighth is the feast of the Ascension of Christ. The ninety-ninth is the feast of the Pentecost. The hundredth is the feast of the Trinity.

his mind. No diseases are more obscure in their character, or perplexing in their treatment, than those of the nervous system. They present themselves in a variety of forms, sometimes consuming by a gradual & prolonged disease, the vital principle; again they manifest themselves in a more violent and heart rending character, either throwing the subject of its violence into a "Demonic phrenzy, moping melancholy, or moon-struck madness."

Or moon-struck madness."

Among the most untractable of the nervous affections, Epilepsy may be ranked. This disease has baffled the efforts of ages in upelling its violence, and in discerning its nature; it seems to be one of those arcana of Pandora, that is wound up in Gordian complexity, and which cannot be unraveled by the most skillful and penetrating mind. Men, who have examined the most profound mysteries of Nature, who have explored the hidden treasures of our mother earth, who have ploughed the deep in a frail bark, directed in their course by the unvarying compass, and whose





minors have penetrated beyond the visible diurnal sphere; have failed in obtaining a correct knowledge of this most obscure & harassing complaint.

In pursuing a subject involved in so much mystery and obscurity, I can only collect together the observations & opinions of the most illustrious authors, and draw such inferences as their views may suggest. It may be necessary in conformity to the plan usually adopted to give, first, a history of its *Symptoms*.

An attack of epilepsy is sometimes, though not always attended by signs, which indicate an approach of the paroxysm. They are a languidness & torpor of the body, a pain or heaviness in the head, drowsiness or disturbed sleep, dimness of sight and tinnitus aurium. Many other promonitory symptoms have been enumerated by authors, the most unequivocal of which is the *Aura Epileptica*. This consists in a very peculiar sensation, which is differently represented by different persons; some



have the feeling produced by a gentle breeze flowing over the surface of the body, from which sensation it derives its name; others liken it to the creeping of an insect over the surface or to the pouring a stream of cold water from the inferior to the upper part of the body. The sensation always commences in some portion of the body, generally at the feet, and ascends to the head; as soon as it reaches the brain, the fit is said to commence. The cause of so singular a feeling is not exactly determined; but it must evidently be seated in the nerves and through their medium transmitted to the brain. Dr. Cullen has supposed & I conceive very correctly, that the aura epileptica is produced by some irritating matter applied to the nervous extremities; he has known it arise from something irritating or pressing upon a particular nerve, and that sometimes from a contusion or wound.

To collect together all the armonitory symptoms, would occupy more time & space than the occasion demands. Having noticed the most



striking we shall present to the first or pre-ecypsis. This, has been so beautifully portrayed by Lucretius in poetical language, and by Cullen with that philosophic accuracy & minute observation, which are characteristic of his works, that it would be presumptuous in me to attempt a description: I shall therefore give the words of the latter.

"The person attracted loses suddenly all sense & power of motion, so that, if standing he falls immediately or perhaps with convulsions is thrown to the ground. In that situation he is agitated with violent convulsions, variously moving his limbs & the trunk of his body. Commonly the limbs on one of the body are more violently or more considerably agitated than those upon the other. In all cases the muscles of the face & eyes are much affected, exhibiting various & violent distortions of the countenance. The tongue is often affected & thrust out of the mouth, while the muscles of the lower jaw are also affected and shutting the mouth with violence



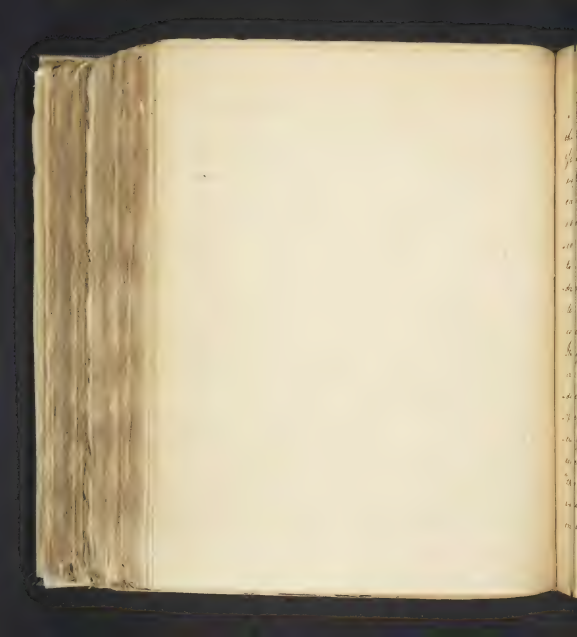
while the tongue is thrust between the teeth, that is often  
 grievously wounded. While these convulsions continue  
 there is commonly at the same time a frothy, moisture  
 issuing from the mouth. These convulsions, have for  
 some moments some remissions, but suddenly renewed  
 with great violence. Generally, after no long time,  
 the convulsions cease altogether, and the person for  
 some time remains without motion, but in a state of  
 absolute insensibility, & under the appearance of  
 a profound sleep. After some continuance of this  
 seeming sleep, the person sometimes suddenly, but for  
 the most part  $\frac{1}{2}$  degree only, recovers his senses  
 & power of motion; but without any memory of  
 what has passed from his being first seized  
 with the fit. The state of the pulse varies in the  
 different stages & according to the violence of the fit.  
 It is generally small & irregular at the commence-  
 -ment of the paroxysm, as it progresses, it becomes  
 more full & strong, and returns to the healthy  
 standard when the <sup>fit</sup> has worn off.



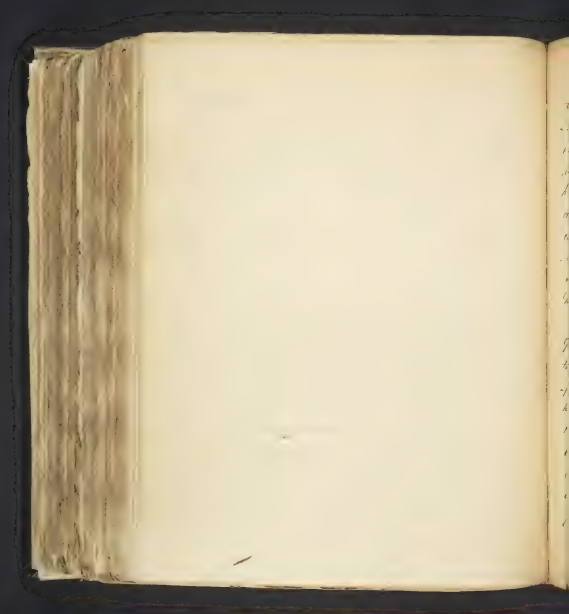


The exertions and exertions are more or less affected, or little obscure, that bile in great quantities is in some ejected from the stomach, and a thick viscid saliva from the mouth. & not unfrequently the feces & urine are involuntarily and forcibly discharged. "Nigrities puerile" in infants, in adolescents, semen ejacular. These are the phenomena observed in a regular paroxysm of epilepsy; they however vary according to the violence & duration of the attack. Patients, are more susceptible to a fit, immediately after having awoken from sleep; sometimes they are roused suddenly from repose by the approach of a paroxysm. Larrea attributes this liability to the disease at such a period, to an increase of sensibility. The return of a paroxysm is very variable generally, though sometimes periodically recurring every week, month, or year.

It has no regard for age, sex, condition or habit: affecting equally the young & old, male & female, the grave as well as the gay.

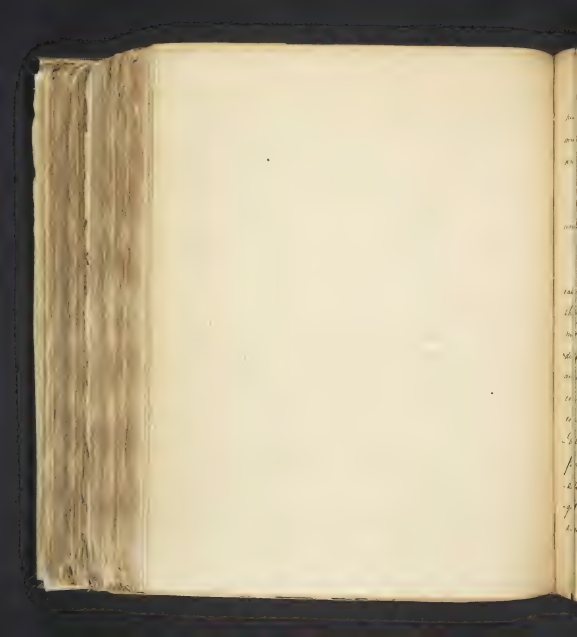


Some authors are among them Forbes &c. assert that the male are more frequently its subjects than the female. This, however, does not comport with the experience of most authors, so that this distinction cannot be drawn. Epilepsy, or certainly, more obviously to this disease, and it may be ascribed to the many incidental causes, they are liable to be subjected. In epileptic paroxysm in children is apt to terminate in death: this is not often the result in adults, though sometimes vitality is extinguished by the force & intensity of the stroke. Its effects, when death is not the immediate consequence, are often very distressing: frequently apoplexy is produced, sometimes a paralytic, and insensibility & other affections of the mental faculty, are frequent consequences of this malady. The most alarming & disagreeable concomitant is the *Mania Epileptica*. Dr Writcham says this affection generally appears when the patient is expected to revive from a comatose state consequent on a severe fit; the face is flushed & the aspect of,



the patient is like that of a man under intoxication, he attempts to start from bed, and run about, even being without consciousness & endeavouring to overcome resistance. Sometimes an appearance of maniacal hallucination displays itself, but more generally the disorder resembles phrenitic delirium. It seldom only continues one, two, or three days during which the patient requires confinement in a straight waistcoat, & then gradually subsides & the patient returns into his usual state."

"Epilepsy, it has been remarked will frequently disappear in children on their approach to puberty & in young females it will be often re-pulsed by the appearance of the catamenia. Here, however, are not always the fortunate results of this insidious disease but it sometimes remains a lasting evil, rendering the life of the person, who is so unfortunate as to be its victim, wretched. From the continual apprehension of an attack from this pernicious enemy, their pleasures, are lessened and



his mind appropriate by the consciousness of his having  
within his Groom, a serpent that will devour his body  
and extinguish life.

"Horrid to think, how brittle to feel."

After this cursory view of the phenomena of epilepsy it  
will be necessary to notice its

#### CAUSES.

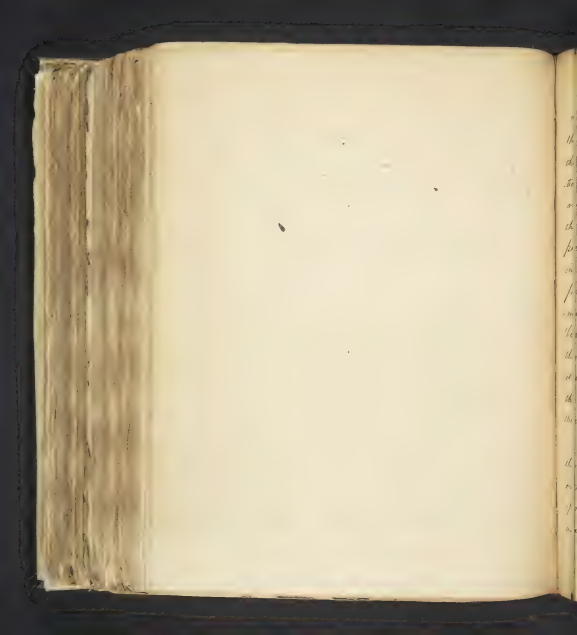
There are more extensive than belong to any other dis-  
ease, to which the human frame is subjected. It cannot  
therefore, be expected that the whole of them, will be  
mentioned in this paper. I state, of the system pre-  
disposing to this affection has been noticed by most  
writers on this subject. In what this predisposition  
consists <sup>is not</sup> determined: Dr Cullen mentions a certain  
condition of the brain, which is called by him a mor-  
bidity of this organ, & is supposed to exist in those  
persons, who are of a fickle & changeable dispo-  
sition equally prone to gaiety & anger; "qui colli-  
git ac ponit iram temere et mutatur in horas." thus  
says he is the "varium et mutabile feminæ."





He considers this mobility to consist in either ex-  
 -cess of sensibility or irritability, which render the  
 exciting cause more ready in its effects from this  
 easy susceptibility to an impression made by an  
 instant. That debility predisposes to this disease  
 we cannot doubt, as we have the satisfactory ap-  
 -pearance of the most acute observers among others Dr. Cullen  
 is convinced that is the fact from the circumstance  
 of women, children, & persons of a debilitated condition  
 being mostly subject to this disease. Although, debil-  
 -ity may act as a predisponent, it is not necessary at  
 -tendant, as we find the most athletic & robust habits,  
 are seized on by this foe, and prostrated at his feet.

A plethoric habit has been commonly ob-  
 -served to render a person particularly susceptible to  
 epilepsy. That it is capable of such an effect we  
 have the positive evidence of Van Swieten, Cullen,  
 Coote & many others. Plethora in predisposing to  
 this disease must operate, by increasing the ir-  
 -ritability of the brain, by the stimulus of overdistension

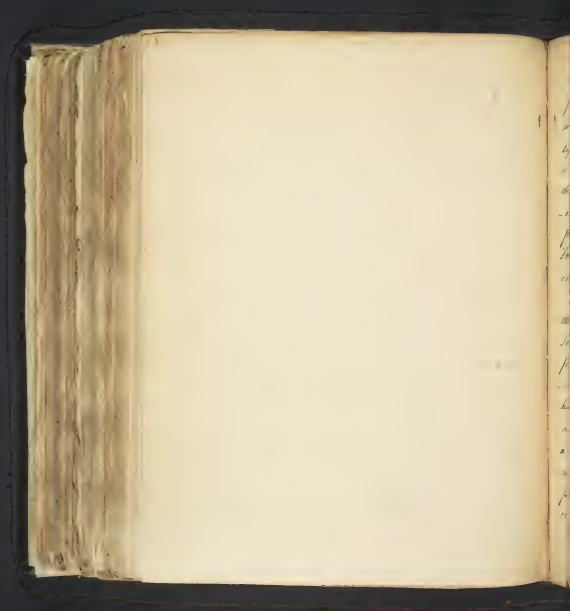


mentioned by Cullen. Certain infirmities of the body, are said to be more open to this disease, they are nearly the same as those noticed in apoplexy, consisting chiefly of a large head, a short neck and it is observed by Leake, Torrey & others, that the crania of epileptics, are thicker than in other persons. An hereditary tendency appears to exist in some families, so that the disease is transmitted from parents to their children, sometimes it lies dormant for several years and then reappears. It has been observed, that persons who have indulged in intemperance in their habits, indulging in debauchery and other debilitating practices, have exempted their progeny from the disease, by becoming sober, temperate and uniform in their manner of living.

The exciting causes, are very numerous, they seem to act principally by producing irritation on the nervous system. Cullen supposes them to operate by excitement and collapse, & arranges them under each of these heads. He has mechanical,



mental, & the peculiar stimulus of over distention. This division embraces all the causes which act by elements; those operating by collapse the arranges individually under that head. The causes, which long in this disease may exist in the brain itself, or be seated in remote parts of the body. Thus we find the vitæ acting as an irritant, by apicula or bony protuberances, shooting from its internal surface and consequently pressing upon the encephalon, tumours arising from within the cranium, Hydatids & effusions are frequently found to exist, and are mentioned in the morbid dispositions of Morgagni, Baillie & all others who have written on the apoplexics post-mort. Abscesses, extensive effusions, and even structural disorganization of the brain have been noticed by Morgagni. Inflammation of the Brain is also mentioned by most writers: Dr Johnston observes "it is the derangement of Balance in the circulation & excitement alone that can produce the immediate phenomena of epilepsy." This constitutes Dr Cullen's



Fourth division of the causes acting by excitement, & what he conceives an overdistention of the vascular system of the Brain. That such a cause he observes will operate in producing epilepsy is probable from this, that the dissections of persons dead of this disease, has commonly discovered the marks of a previous congestion in the Vessels of the Brain. This observation is confirmed by Morgagni and others who have examined the epileptic post mortem.

Among the many causes acting directly on the Brain, is a strong emotion of any of the passions. Terror, perhaps, oftener than any other passion has produced this disease: instances are related by almost every author on the subject. Dr Wootke, in his treatise on epilepsy, has collected together a number of interesting cases of the effects of alarm, some of which I shall take the liberty to mention. At last, as related by Van Swieten, during pregnancy was so much alarmed by a fire in the neighbourhood, that she fell into convulsions.





Fits which ultimately prove fatal. Lepot, saw a female thrown into convulsive Fits, upon receiving an insult from a insolent fellow; from which she never recovered. Out of fourteen patients under the care of a German physician, at Vienna as she were induced by terror; a strong evidence of the power this passion possesses of the earnest with which it should be avoided. On the horrible 10<sup>th</sup> August, when such a dreadful massacre ensued at Paris, a young man, was so strongly affected by the scene as to become epileptic.

Impressions, made on the senses by strong objects, have been assigned as a cause of this disease; Dr Cullen is disposed to attribute their action to horror. The passions, are often roused, in public assemblies, where political subjects, are discussed, to such a height, as to bring on this disorder; as frequently did it occur in the Comitia of the Romans, that it obtained the name of Morbus Comitialis, and was held in such

